

P STATHOULIS

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SPEECH

BY P STATHOULIS

ON THE OCCASION OF THE 176TH ANNIVERSARY

OF THE HELLENIC DAY OF INDEPENDENCE

HELD ON 23 MARCH 1997

Hellenism, throughout the world, is commemorating its 176th Day of Independence, after 400 years under Turkish rule. Special Church Services are being held as Thanksgiving. This occasion is not confined within the boundaries of Greece, but Hellenes throughout the world are gathering to celebrate this important day - an achievement not only for Hellas, but for Western Civilization and Democracy.

It is not for me, nor the occasion to-day, to go into the detailed history of the War of Independence, started by Heroes such as **Palion Patron Germanos, Theodoros Kolokotronis** and many others. Hellenes abroad, who had formed the **Philiki Eteria** i.e. The Friendly Society, which spread to all the major cities throughout the world, embracing all Hellenes who had fled Greece, to avoid the Turkish rule, also played an important role. The historical and popular involvement of Lord Byron, also formed part of the war of Greek Independence.

The reading of this history will always remain interesting and beneficial for the Historian and naturally, for the Hellene. It reflects to the world at large, not only what is to-day known as the commencement of modern Greece, but also the survival of the birthplace of Western Civilization and the Cradle of Democracy after 400 years of Turkish rule.

It will always show that "The Voice of the People - the Hellenes, had not fallen silent". "The Hellenes safeguarded their consciousness as a Nation" throughout the 400 years of Turkish rule and wherever they existed throughout the world. They awaited the opportunity to destroy the shackles that tried to bond them to a different culture and civilization. Nowhere near their standard.

Your Grace, **Archbishop Paul Lyngris**, Your Excellency, Ambassador for Greece **Mr Theophanopoulos** and **Mrs Theophanopoulos**, Consul General for Cyprus **Mr Toumazis** and **Mrs Toumazis**, our Representatives from the Hellenic Parliament, **Messrs Elias Papadopoulos, Nicolaos Gatzis, Evangelos Apostolou** and **Md.Vasiliki Arapi**. Mr Consul General for Greece **Mr Dafaranos** and **Mrs Dafaranos**.

Our very, very close friends and distinguished guests, the **First Citizens** of our towns and **Mayors** from:

- | | | | |
|----|--------------------|-----|---------------------|
| 1. | Pretoria | 10. | Alberton |
| 2. | Johannesburg | 11. | South.Local Metrop. |
| 3. | Germiston | 12. | Randburg |
| 4. | Roodepoort | 13. | Sandton |
| 5. | West-Rand | 14. | Vereeniging |
| 6. | Benoni | 15. | Vanderbijlpark |
| 7. | North East Metrop. | 16. | Carletonville |
| 8. | Boksburg | 17. | Fochville |
| 9. | Springs | | |

All our Distinguished Guests - **SIMPATRIOTES** - fellow Hellenes, thank-you for joining us - on this occasion. We give thanks to Our Lord. We are grateful to our Forefathers who fought and sacrificed to carry the Flag of Independence and to free Hellenism - **Hellas**, from the barbarous yolk of 400 years of rule and suppression by the Ottoman Empire.

Mr Mayors, as representatives of your local Communities, your presence reflects your respect for Hellenes, who in spite of being a minority Community, plays a very important role in your Cities, Towns and naturally in the Country as a whole - Economically, Culturally and Socially. As you will have noticed, each Hellenic Community and Organisation based in your city and town, plays an indispensable role in the life of all your people. Remember, we are providers of a very large proportion of job opportunities in South Africa and have no doubt that we will continue with our job creation.

Mr Mayors, if you look around on these grounds and look at our SAHETI School, an institution that is still growing, the various Churches and Community Centres in your towns, our Social Clubs, various forms of Cultural activities embracing the entire South African Society - all this, built and provided from the savings of South African Hellenes. Our participation and continued involvement reflects our Investment and faith in the future of this wonderful country. **Thank you for sharing and being part of us.**

Our Visitors from Greece - the Representatives of the Hellenic Parliament, **Messrs Papadopoulos, Gatzis, Apostolou and Md. Arapi**, thank you for joining us to-day and for sharing this important occasion with your fellow Hellenes at the furthest tip in Africa, but with people whom I am certain, will make you feel and appreciate Hellenism as much as what you would be able to in Greece or any other part of the world.

Welcome and may your stay be happy and filled with pleasant memories. We are grateful that Mother Greece sees fit to send Representatives to share these important days with us.

Καλωσηρθατε λοιπον και ευχομαστε η παραμονη σας να ειναι ευχαριστη και γεματη ομορφες στιγμες. Εμιαστε ευγνωμονες οτι η Μητερα Ελλαδα το θεωρει σωστο να στείλει Αντιπροσωπους για να περασουν τις σημαντικες αυτες μαρες μαζί μας.

Unfortunately, however, Hellenes throughout the world, cannot and **are not** commemorating with total contentment and satisfaction. The world at large is aware of the threats that Greece's neighbour - Turkey - is making continuously. Turkey still refuses to obey International rules. Hellenism continues to have this "black cloud" darken the brightness of its Independence and history. The Turkish attitudes and practises in our Beloved Cyprus and threats to Greek Sovereignty, is ongoing.

Only months ago, did the world once again witness the brutal execution, not killing, but **execution**, of two defenceless young men, two heroes - who sought to practise what has been bestowed upon them - **their Human rights**. Hellenism asks - "For how long are **we** going to allow this to carry on?"

Yes, it is correct, **WE DO NOT FORGET** - the Hellenes will never forget the 400 years of suppression and to-day, the International threats against Greece and the continuous refusal to recognise the unjustified occupation of 40% of Cyprus, is not to be forgotten. The voice of Hellenes, will not fall silent - Hellenes abroad will continue to safeguard the voice and concern of our Hellas. The spirit of the "**Philiki Eteria**" - The Friendly Society, is being rekindled into life throughout the world and we Hellenes in South Africa, will form an integral part of this movement.

Ναι, σωστα καταλαβατε, ΔΕΝ ΞΕΧΝΟΥΜΕ - οι Ελληνες ποτε δεν θα ξεχασουν τα 400 χρονια καταπιεσης και σημερα οι διεθνεις απειλες εναντιον της Ελλαδος και η συνεχης αρνηση να αναγνωριστει η αδικαιωτη κατοχη των 40% της Κυπρου, δεν ειναι πραγματα που μπορουμε να ξεχασουμε. Οι φωνες των Ελληνων δεν θα σιωπησουν. Οι Ελληνες του εξωτερικου θα συνεχισουν να φρουρουν την φωνη και τα ενδιαφεροντα της Ελλαδας μας. Το πνευμα της Φιλικης Εταιρειας αναζωογονειται παντου στο κοσμο.

~~It is not for me to delve into the detail of the rights and wrongs of Turkey~~ - We note what the great powers are saying. The United Nations' attitude and policy if obeyed by Turkey is one that would bring about a solution, but Turkey does not obey or relent. They do not respect Human Rights. They do not know - or if they did know what Human Rights signifies, they refuse to practise it. The unjustified occupation of homes and land that is not theirs in Cyprus, as well as the isolation of many Cypriot Hellenes. Whilst within Turkey itself, we hear and read reports of their brutal killings of Kurds and the jailing of those who dare utter anti-Turkish Government slogans. We have just celebrated **Human Rights Day** - we wonder what this means to Turkey.

We Hellenes in South Africa, have been accused that through the medium of the Press, our Television broadcasts and the Radio, that we make anti-Turkish utterances that are insulting to the Turkish Nation. Let it be placed on record, that the statements which are made, are the truth and they can ^{withstand any} be openly challenged. We ask, let them fall in line with what the world wants - **respect Human Rights and justice** - and it is certain Hellenes will stop making these statements and offer their hand of co-operation.

Friends, discussions have been held recently, with the Foreign Ministry in South Africa, together with Mr Christofides - President of Hellenic Cypriots Abroad and our Federation, to **canvass** the assistance of the South African Government and to obtain their support at Commonwealth level, amongst the African States, as well as at the United Nations, so that the respect for Human Rights can be introduced in Cyprus.

What better Nation, than South Africa, the modern day champions of Human Rights, the Nation which on the eve of the end of the 20th Century, achieved what all humanity strives for - **Respect for Human Rights and Democracy**. It is certain that the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa, would have a field day if it were allowed to examine the atrocities and suppression of Human Beings in Cyprus in 1974 and their attitude towards the Cypriot Hellenes in recent times. **We South African Hellenes, are proud to be part of this Nation.**

Ladies and Gentlemen, I would be failing if I did not thank the Organisers of today's event:

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George
DANIEL
CHAIRMAN
of Functions
Mr Krokidas

~~Mr George Daniel, Chairman of, EPNEK and its enthusiastic hard~~
workers, ~~Mrs Krokidas of our Functions Committee,~~ all her
colleagues, The PanHellenic Voice is thanked for its assistance, as
well as the Greek Sporting Club for preparing the grounds, our
Secretary Ms Maria-Anna Deroukakis and my personal secretary,
Mrs Irene Zachas. We thank the Military Band for its participation
here to-day and giving musical life to the event. We thank the St
John's Ambulance, the local Traffic Department and all those who
have assisted to make an occasion that warrants the best attention.
I thank all my colleagues on the Federation.

Last but not least, my particular gratitude to the Chairmen of the
Communities and Associations, together with their Committees, not
only for their participation, but for the very hard work they are
putting into the promotion and retention of Hellenism in South
Africa. We are grateful and proud of you all.

Ευχαριστώ όλους τους συναδέλφους μου της Ομοσπονδίας. ~~Τέλειωσαν, αλλά όχι~~
~~αποχαιρέτησαν~~ ευχαριστώ όλους σας που βρίσκεστε μαζί μας και ιδιαίτερα εκφράζω την Σεμειώση
εγνώμοσυνη προς τους προέδρους των Κοινοτήτων και Συλλογών μαζί με τα SANEti
Συμβουλία τους, όχι μόνο για την συμμετοχή τους αλλά και για την σκληρή δουλειά H. Deroukakis
που κάνουν για να προωθηθεί και να διατηρηθεί ο Ελληνισμός στην Νοτιο Αφρική. Ευχαριστήριο
Είμαστε ~~και τα δύο~~, ευγνώμονες και περήφανοι για όλους σας.

I thank you all for joining us.

With this, may I ask that with one voice, we utter:

ZITO TO ETHNOS - ZITO H HELLAS - ZITO H KYPRO!

THANK YOU.

20 March 1997

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